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## Poems

E. Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake

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## Poems

### Abstract

THE IDLERS, RE-VOYAGE

## E. Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake

### THE IDLERS

The sun's red pulses beat,  
Full prodigal of heat,  
Full lavish of its luster unrepressed;  
But we have drifted far  
From where his kisses are,  
And in this landward-lying shade we let our paddles rest.

The river, deep and still,  
The maple-mantled hill,  
The little yellow beach whereon we lie,  
The puffs of heated breeze,  
All sweetly whisper – These  
Are days that only come in a Canadian July.

So, silently we two  
Lounge in our still canoe,  
Nor fate, nor fortune matters to us now:  
So long as we alone  
May call this dream our own,  
The breeze may die, the sail may droop, we care not when or how.

Against the thwart, near by,  
Inactively you lie,  
And all too near my arm your temple bends.  
Yours indolently crude,  
Abandoned attitude,  
Is one of ease and art, in which a perfect languor blends.

Your costume, loose and light,  
Leaves unconcealed your might  
Of muscle, half suspected, half defined;  
And falling well aside,  
Your vesture opens wide,  
Above your splendid sunburnt throat that pulses unconfined.

With easy unreserve,  
Across the gunwale's curve,  
Your arm superb is lying, brown and bare;  
Your hand just touches mine  
With import firm and fine,  
(I kiss the very wind that blows about your tumbled hair).

Ah! Dear, I am unwise  
In echoing your eyes  
Whene'er they leave their far-off gaze, and turn  
To melt and blur my sight;  
For every other light  
In servile to your cloud-grey eyes, wherein cloud shadows burn.

But once the silence breaks,  
But once your ardour wakes  
To words that humanize this lotus-land;  
So perfect and complete  
Those burning words and sweet,  
So perfect is the single kiss your lips lay on my hand.

The paddles lie disused,  
The fitful breeze abused,  
Has dropped to slumber, with no after-blow;  
And hearts will pay the cost,  
For you and I have lost  
More than the homeward blowing wind that died an hour ago.

'The Idlers' was first published in *Saturday Night* (28 June 1890) and subsequently republished in Pauline Johnson's first collection of poetry, *The White Wampum* (John Lane, 1895) and later in a selection of her poetry published by Musson in 1912, *Flint and Feather*.

## RE-VOYAGE

What of the days when we two dreamed together?

Days marvelously fair,  
As lightsome as a skyward floating feather  
Sailing on summer air –  
Summer, summer, that came drifting through  
Fate's hand to me, to you.

What of the days, my dear? I sometimes wonder

If you too wish this sky  
Could be the blue we sailed so softly under,  
In that sun-kissed July;  
Sailed in the warm and yellow afternoon,  
With hearts in touch and tune.

Have you no longer to re-live the dreaming,  
Adrift in my canoe?

To watch my paddle blade all wet and gleaming  
Cleaving the waters through?  
To lie wind-blown and wave-caressed, until  
Your restless pulse grows still?

Do you not long to listen to the purling  
Of foam athwart the keel?  
To hear the nearing rapids softly swirling  
Among their stones, to feel  
The boat's unsteady tremor as it braves  
The wild and snarling waves?

What need of question, what of your replying?

Oh! Well I know that you  
Would toss the world away to be but lying  
Again in my canoe,  
In listless indolence entranced and lost,  
Wave-rocked, and passion tossed.

Ah me! my paddle failed me in the steering  
Across love's shoreless seas;  
All reckless, I had ne'er a thought of fearing  
Such dreary days as these,  
When through the self-same rapids we dash by,  
My lone canoe and I.

'Re-Voyage' was first published in *The Independent* (2 July 1891) and subsequently republished in Pauline Johnson's first collection of poetry, *The White Wampum* (John Lane, 1895) and later in a selection of her poetry published by Musson in 1912, *Flint and Feather*.